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Fidelia Ngozi ENEM

University Library, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, fidelia.enem@unn.edu.ng

Oyemike Victor BENSON

Department of Library and Information Science, Federal Polytechnic, Nekede-Owerri, Nigeria, ovbenenson@fpno.edu.ng

Josephine C. IGBOKWE

University Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Nigeria., josephine.igbokwe@unn.edu.ng

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**Libraries Participation in Corporate Social Responsibility Activities for Sustainable
Development in South Nigeria**

Fidelia Ngozi ENEM

Senior Librarian, University Library, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus

fidelia.enem@unn.edu.ng, enemfidel2006@yahoo.com

Oyemike Victor BENSON

Department of Library and Information Science,

Federal Polytechnic, Nekede-Owerri, Nigeria

ovbenson@fpno.edu.ng, bensoyemike@gmail.com,

Josephine C. IGBOKWE

Senior Librarian, Cataloguing Section

University Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Nigeria.

josephine.igbokwe@unn.edu.ng,

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper is a survey on the basis for libraries participation in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities in south east and south-south Nigeria. This paper seeks to unravel the reasons why libraries should engage in CSR activities. **Design/ methodology/approach:** The study adopted survey research method with questionnaire designed using four-point likert rating scale for data collection. Population of study comprise of librarians working in the university libraries selected from the south-east and south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria; a total of 129 questionnaires were retrieved and analyzed using descriptive statistics. **Findings:** It was revealed that participating in community development, promotion of citizens welfare, disseminating information on employment opportunities to unemployed graduates, ensuring timely, regular and relevant information services-provision to members of the host community, supporting educational related activities such as scholarships and intern opportunities, and partnering with stakeholders to enhance educational consciousness of the citizenry among others are CSR activities that libraries can engage for sustainable development. Opportunities open to libraries from participating in CSR include change in public perception of libraries, establishment of mutual understating between the library and the community with librarians strengthening their value chain among others. Possible challenges to effective participation of libraries in CSR activities revealed include inadequate finding of libraries stakeholders' divergent ideology on CSR lack of commitment towards CSR activities etc. **Practical implications:** There is an urgent need for librarians to embrace the philosophy of CSR and explore it as a means of remaining relevant to the society and their immediate environment. Also, there is need to include corporate social responsibility and corporate librarianship into the curriculum of marketing in library schools. **Originality/value:** This paper is of value to heads of libraries and stakeholders in information services and those interested in innovative library practice.

Keywords: Libraries, sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, librarians

Introduction

Librarians, from earliest times, have been in the business of contributing to development either through supporting education or other sectors through information service delivery. Libraries can no longer function in isolation of the communities where they serve and are hosted. They like other organizations, in an attempt to remain relevant in the contemporary society are gradually embracing new trends in the provision of information services (Benson, 2019). The various types of libraries are now taking pragmatic steps to remain relevant in the society, and the university library is not left out in the drive for sustainable relevance in the contemporary society.

Libraries exist in an environment and their operations can cause both positive and negative implications for the host community where they exist and operate. Talking about CSR in libraries refers to the obligations of libraries to the host community and the society in general as well as other stakeholders within that community. In contemporary society where the “information industry sector” is becoming highly competitive with alternatives emerging every seconds of the day, it thus become pertinent for libraries to undertake social programs as strategy for assisting government. However, no matter how the library wants to engage in CSR activities, it ought to complement the library mission, it should not conflict or compete with the goals of the library in any way. Going to the domain of libraries, the need for CSR is becoming more critical than ever before. Library Social Responsibility (LSR) refers to the process of libraries adopting good practices that impact and contributes to library’s reputation and performance. It encompasses many different areas such as the need to strengthen commitment by adopting community engagement outreach as strategy for providing services to the community, among others. LSR as part of CSR helps libraries to maintain a healthy relationship with members of the community. Kagan (2005:12) concluded that:

We live in volatile times where inequality, violence, and prejudice of all kinds threaten the human community, a resource that can provide access to information and cultural materials to all, without distinction to class, gender, ethnic group, country of origin, citizenship status, or sexual orientation. Our materials and services can make a meaningful contribution to the people of our communities by promoting literacy, equalizing access to materials in all

formats, advocating for human rights, preserving and promoting culture and by promoting intellectual freedom. Libraries can become true community centres.

Libraries are part of the society and as such have a social responsibility. Moreover, as information service provision is becoming competitive and no longer the sole responsibility of libraries, it is imperative that implementing CSR in public libraries should be considered. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is no longer a practice among large multinational companies operating in the developed countries; with many companies in emerging markets seeking the value of community to responsible business practices (Frimpong, Adjei & Poku, 2014). CSR refers to a whole range of fundamentals that organizations are expected to acknowledge and to reflect in their actions. It includes but not limited to caring the sustainability of the environment, respecting human rights, fair treatment of the workforce, customers and suppliers, being good corporate citizens of the communities, fair trade with business ethics, etc (Kumar and Balakrishman, 2011).

According to Ismail (2009), the present day CSR (also called corporate responsibility corporate citizenship, responsible business and corporate social responsibility) is a concept whereby business organizations consider the interest of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders, communities and other. CSR according to Smith (2011) as cited in Sitaram (2015), is well defined as a business organization that empowers the production and dispersal of capital for the advancement of its stakeholder through the employment and incorporation of principled systems and maintainable organization practices. The crucial “parts” of the definition comprise: the manufacture and dispersal of wealth , stakeholder management, creating a principled system and supportable management practices. Sitaram further asserted that each parts of the anticipated definition cannot be executed as individual programs, neither can any be omitted. In which case, a system thinking approach is needed to enable corporations to achieve “the inter-relationships” rather than linear cause-effect chains and seeing procedures of change relatively than snapshots.

Sitaram (2015) defined CSR as the organization's doings and position linked to its observed communal or stakeholder responsibilities. Here, an organization is required to act in imperative to "protect and improve both the welfare of the society as a whole and the interest of the organizations". CSR is an excellent indicator of the legitimacy of a firm. Along with the western world, CSR is also gaining currency in the developing world (Azim, 2016). From the organizations viewpoints, its CSR set of moral duties towards other social actors and towards society that the organization assumes as a result of its economic, social, political and of course, ethical reflection of its role in society and on its relationships with those other actors (Sitaram, 2015).

Nevertheless, the reason for the emergence of CSR and its implementation in public libraries are premised on the principle of dynamism and change. This is however, in line with global practices of most organizations in the world. The emergence of CSR in the global arena cannot be undermined for any reason. Today, CSR is a global concept that has progressed from the interplay of thought and practice. Libraries of all sizes and types must embrace the concept of CSR in order to remain relevant in the contemporary society.

This study is anchored on Social identity theory (SIT) proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). The theory is anchored on the psychological and sociological aspects of group behaviour. It is an integrative theory about the perception of physiological basis of intergroup discrimination. The premise of social identity theory is that different social categories (e.g. race, gender, political affiliation, sport team), provide a definition of who is connected to the organization. SIT highlights the categorization and comparison processes that guide individuals' perceptions of the organization, such as its prestige or distinctiveness, and stimulate identification. The distinguishing feature of SIT is its implication that employees are likely to express themselves in groups that they feel is right about and this helps to clarify the connection between CSR and organizational commitment.

SIT suggest that employees in any organization are likely to be proud of identifying with organization that have a positive external reputation. SIT provides a rational explanation of the relationship between perceived CSR and employee positive attitude. The relationship is likely to be stronger if the employees find that their organizations are involved in CSR activities more rigorously than their competitors are (Azim, 2016).

From the foregoing, it is evident that engaging in corporate social responsibility will give the library some form of social identity; however it is yet to be empirically established if university libraries in Nigeria do engage in CSR activities for sustainable development. It is on this premise that this study is being carried using university libraries in south-east and south-south Nigeria as case study.

Objectives of the Study

The study generally aims at evaluating university libraries participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives for sustainable development in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are, to:

1. determine corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities that libraries should engage for sustainable development in the society;
2. ascertain the rationale for libraries' participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives;
3. identify opportunities opened to libraries from participating in corporate social responsibility (CSR);
4. identify challenges that may limit the effectiveness of libraries participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives;

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated in line with the objectives of the study

1. What are the corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities that libraries should engage for sustainable development?
2. What are the rationales for libraries participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives?
3. What are the opportunities opened to libraries from participating in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives?
4. What are the challenges that may limit the effectiveness of libraries participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives?

Review of Related Literature

Today, organizations play a vital role in the development of society and their duties go beyond their economic functions and legal requirements; More so, in order to satisfy stakeholders expectations. They incorporate social, ethical and environmental commitments to their business performance (Krainz, 2015). There are various forms of CSR. The form of CSR to implement by libraries and information centres would depend on the needs of the community where such libraries exist. The four kinds of social responsibility identified by Carroll as cited in Amoako (2017), are legal responsibilities, ethical responsibilities, economic responsibility, and philanthropic responsibilities. The legal responsibility of a firm requires that there should be compliance with the law. This implies that the operations and activities of the organization should be in conformity with laws from, inter alia, the national, regional, and district levels. Also, ethical responsibilities on the other hand require that business entities show attitudes and behaviours that are consistent with social norms beyond what the law requires. It reflects a concern for what consumers, employees, shareholders and the community regard as fair and also a protection of stakeholder's moral rights.

There are different areas of CSR that libraries can engage in order to remain relevant in contemporary society. According to Oyeronke (2012), public libraries are government-owned libraries; therefore, they can liaise with other government agencies such as the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in training youths who are interested in starting small-scale business by organizing regular seminars and workshops for them. In his words, the involvement of public libraries can create awareness among unemployed youths who are interested in such training but are ignorant of its existence. Furthermore, apart from liaising with CBN, public libraries can organize seminars, workshops and trainings where entrepreneurs who started their businesses from the scratch are invited as resource persons to share their experiences.

Kagan (2005) stressed that libraries can also provide tax forms and condoms to prevent HIV/AIDs. Public libraries to him can be a place for literacy classes and voter registration. They can be used as community centers where people, including poor people, immigrants and diverse populations of all kinds find materials and participate in local culture and civic affairs to actualize their potentials and develop their communities.

. Emezie and Igwe (2017) sees CSR as actions geared towards delivering programs and services that tend to reduce challenges encountered by the community and also contributes to the overall well being and development of the community. This to them could be educationally, socially, economically or through the development of infrastructures and provision of essential services. They further posit that providing community information service as corporate social responsibility has become expedient for academic libraries because of their functionality and proximity to rural dwellers. These actions are necessary as it will ultimately facilitate economic transformation, development and actualization of sustainable development goals.

Furthermore, Maruf (2013) reveals that corporate social responsibility has positive impact on corporate image even though, it is not the most important factor. He sees CSR as crucial in creating attractive corporate image (CI), providing competitive advantage and differentiation, thereby leading to business success. Ali and Ali (2011) in their study recommend that corporations should incorporate CSR into the strategic decision making process in order to build good reputation and motivating employees for better performance. They stated further that it is worthwhile for corporations to integrate their business activities internally (employee motivation to become more committed) and externally i.e. corporate reputation in order to survive the economic downturn.

According to Franco and Suguna (2015), leaders need to be aware of what pay offs they can expect to get from an investment in CSR and it should be noted that a miraculous improvement in retention rate is not likely to be one of them. Stating further, they stressed that though immediate benefits might be low, it is likely that the importance of CSR will increase in years to come to known as people become interested in social and environmental efforts of corporations.

Examining CSR from another dimension, Prutina (2016) posits that the CSR culture can be seen as a culture that balance the material, social and spiritual dimensions in the workplace for the benefit of all stakeholders. Whereas, Ojo and Akande (2014) described CSR as a way of reconciling and harmonizing economic considerations and societal expectation in ways that are mutually benefitting. Corporate social responsibility activities as explained by Ibrahim (2017) can generate many forms of competitive advantage. He sees CSR as the entire range of business responsibilities an organization has towards society. It is represented in four types - namely,

economic, legal, ethical and discretionary responsibilities. Adeyanju (2012) noted that CSR has to do with an organization going out of his way to initiate actions that will impact positively on its host community, its environment and the people generally. Here, it can be seen as a way of acknowledging the fact the some business fall outs have adverse effects on the citizens and society and making efforts to ensure that such negative impact are corrected. CSR therefore, can be referred to as decisions and actions taken by organizations for reasons at least, particularly beyond the organization's direct economic or technical interest.

It must be stated that the provision of CSR initiatives are not without challenges. Implementation of CSR practices in libraries like every other library innovative initiatives may be limited to one or more factors. The view of several authors on challenges to the implementation of CSR is the focal point of this section. Chigbu, John-Okeke and Omekwu (2016), note that the most critical challenge of CSRs intervention is the sustainability of their projects. Where sustainability apparatus are weak, or ill-defined or not implemented, it is a matter of time before the facilities and services fall into a complete state of disuse. Also, Apronti (2017) is of the view that empirical evidence reveals that despite the advancement made in CSR at the global font, CSR in Africa is still largely philanthropic and of little significance. It involves unsustainable and uncritical investments in health, education and general infrastructural development. Olowokudejo and Aduloju (2011) in their study indicated that insurance companies still suffer from the lack of awareness, unavailability of information to identify the needs of a developing society, lack of qualified workforce and adverse economic factors that prevent them from performing CSR activities. They also noted that inadequate financial resources and budget constraints have led insurance companies to practice only some forms of CSR activities.

Research Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used in this study. Rating scale was used for data collection. The population of study comprised of librarians working in university libraries in south east and south-south Nigeria. These include federal universities - University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN); Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAAU); Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun (FUPRE); University of Calabar (UNICAL); University of Port-Harcourt (UNIPORT); Whereas, the state universities surveyed include Imo

State University, Owerri (IMSU); Ebonyi State University,(EBSU); Chukwuemeka Odimegwu University, (COU); (DELSU) and Akwa Ibom State University, University.

A total of one hundred and fifty-eight instruments were administered to librarians working in the university libraries selected from the south-east and south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria respectively; and a total of 129 questionnaires were retrieved and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis while results were presented in tables. Responses to items statements were weighted as follows; Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1

Table 1: Number of questionnaires retrieved from responding institutions

S/N	Name of institution		
	a. Federal Universities	Number of questionnaires retrieved	
1	University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN)	38	
2	Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike(MOUAU);	8	
3	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun (FUPRE);	9	
4	University of Calabar (UNICAL);	15	
5	University of Port-Harcourt (UNIPORT);	10	
	Total for federal universities	80	80
	b. State Universities		
1	Imo State University, Owerri (IMSU);	12	
2	Ebonyi State University,(EBSU);	4	
3	Chukwuemeka Odimegwu University, (COU)	7	
4	Delta State University, Abraka (DELSU)	16	
5	Akwa Ibom State University, University	10	
	Total for state universities	49	49
	Grand Total		129

Results and Discussions of Findings

The results and findings of the study are hereby presented as follows:

Objective 1: Determine corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities that libraries should engage for sustainable development

Table 1: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) options for Libraries

S/N	Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) options for Libraries	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
a.	Agricultural development and empowerment programmes	24	50	42	13	2.7	5.3
b.	Business empowerment activities	38	43	35	8	2.9	5.9
c.	Contributing to rural and community development initiatives	42	68	15	4	3.1	8.5
d.	Disseminating information on employment opportunities to unemployed graduates	61	40	7	11	3.3	9.7
e.	Educational development and empowerment programs / initiatives;	46	59	21	3	3.1	8.0
f.	Ensuring timely, regular and relevant information services provision to members of the host community	84	38	7	0	3.6	12.5
e.	Environmental consciousness and awareness campaign	23	76	19	11	2.9	8.7
g.	Guarding against discrimination in employment on the ground of religion, political opinion sex or race	42	57	23	7	3.0	7.4
h.	Healthcare service delivery through provision of health-related information services	30	72	15	12	2.9	8.4
i.	Supporting educational related activities such as scholarships and intern opportunities	46	68	11	4	3.2	8.9
j.	Organizing seminars on entrepreneurial opportunities	39	53	37	0	3.0	6.7
k.	Participate in community development and promotion of citizens' welfare	34	77	18	0	3.1	9.0
l.	Partnering with stakeholders to enhance educational consciousness of the citizenry	53	46	27	3	3.2	7.9
m.	Providing medical / health education	32	49	40	8	2.8	5.6
Grand Mean =						3.1	

From the table above, at the grand mean of 3.1, the various CSR activities that libraries should engage for sustainable development are: 'ensuring timely, regular and relevant information services provision to members of the host community (\bar{x} = 3.6), and 'disseminating information on employment opportunities to unemployed graduates (\bar{x} = 3.3), partnering with stakeholders to enhance educational consciousness of the citizenry (\bar{x} = 3.2), supporting educational related activities such as scholarships and intern opportunities (\bar{x} = 3.2), contributing

to rural and community development initiatives (\bar{x} = 3.2). The rate at which librarians agreed with the items raised indicate that librarians are aware that providing CSR initiatives will contribute to sustainable development. This finding is in agreement with Oyeronke (2012) that libraries can organize seminars, workshops and trainings as way of providing CSR for sustainable development. This further supports the view of Kagan (2005) that public libraries can be a place of literacy classes.

Objective 2: Ascertain the rationale for libraries’ participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Table 2: Rationale for Libraries’ participation in CSR activities

S/N	Rationale for Libraries’ Participation in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Activities include	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
a.	Efficient provision of information resources and service is no longer the only thing society expects from libraries	51	55	23	0	3.2	8.2
b.	Involvement of libraries in CSR will enhance the public perception at the long run	27	78	24	0	3.0	8.9
c.	Involving in CSR activities empowers libraries to gain competitive advantage over competitors in the information industry	32	69	21	7	3.0	7.9
d.	Libraries participation in CSR activities will help in attracting patronage	59	48	22	0	3.3	8.9
e.	Libraries are social institutions and as such must live up to demands of society	65	57	3	4	3.4	10.5
f.	Libraries engagement in CSR activities will ensure that librarians becomes more productive and proactive in service delivery	66	53	10	0	3.4	10.2
Grand Mean =						3.2	

From the table above, ‘libraries are social institutions and as such must live up to demands of society (\bar{x} = 3.4) and ‘libraries engagement in CSR activities will ensure that librarians becomes more productive and proactive in service delivery’ (\bar{x} = 3.4). This was followed by libraries participation in CSR activities will help in attracting patronage (\bar{x} = 3.3), efficient provision of information resources and service is no longer the only thing society expects from libraries (\bar{x} = 3.), and involvement of libraries in CSR will enhance the public

perception at the long run (\bar{x} = 3.0). This finding is in line with the view of Maruf (2013) that CSR has positive impacts on corporate image of organization.

Objective 3: Identify opportunities opened to libraries from participating in corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Table 3: Opportunities opened to libraries for participating in CSR activities

S/N	Opportunities Opened to Libraries for Participating in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Activities include	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
a.	Change in public perception of libraries	65	53	11	0	3.4	10.1
b.	Contributes to welfare of librarians	27	68	19	15	2.8	7.7
c.	Enhancement of library's corporate image	43	49	28	9	3.0	6.8
d.	Establishment of mutual understanding between the library and the community	67	48	4	10	3.3	10.4
e.	Increase in customer patronage and satisfaction	38	77	14	0	3.2	9.2
f.	It increases the visibility of the library in the business world	41	53	21	14	2.9	6.9
g.	Library's image improvement	36	70	5	18	3.0	8.7
h.	Gaining competitive advantage over other competitors in the information industry	30	79	7	13	3.0	9.4
i.	Librarians can strengthen their value chain through CSR	48	76	5	0	3.3	10.0
j.	Attracting quality staff to libraries and information centres	49	54	26	0	3.2	7.9
k.	Increase in the intake in library schools	35	81	13	0	3.2	9.6
Grand Mean =						3.12	

From the table above, 'change in public perception of libraries', 'establishment of mutual understanding between the library and the community' and 'Librarians can strengthen their value chain through CSR' with the highest mean ratings, 3.4, 3.3 and 3.3 respectively, have been identified as opportunities opened to libraries from participating in corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Objective 4: Identify challenges that may limit the effectiveness of libraries participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Table 4: Challenges to effective participation of libraries in CSR activities

S/N	Challenges to Effective Participation of Libraries in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
a.	Inadequate funding of libraries	87	31	4	7	3.5	13.1
b.	Lack of commitment towards CSR activities	34	73	16	6	3.1	8.6
c.	Lack of transparency	49	52	13	5	3.2	8.4
d.	Little or no knowledge about CSR within the local communities	30	69	18	12	2.9	7.9
e.	Narrow perception of CSR initiatives	28	70	31	0	3.0	7.8
f.	Nature of training acquired in library school did not equip librarians with requisite skills for CSR	34	77	18	0	3.1	9.0
g.	Non-availability of clear CSR guidelines	26	73	14	16	2.8	8.4
h.	Stakeholders' divergent ideology on CSR	37	75	17	0	3.2	8.9
i.	The library status as a social institution	34	56	30	10	2.9	6.4
j.	Lack of properly trained staff	36	65	23	5	3.0	7.7
k.	Poor supervision of staff	23	61	24	21	2.7	6.6
Grand Mean =						3.03	

From the table above, 'Inadequate funding of libraries', 'Lack of transparency' and 'Stakeholders' divergent ideology on CSR' with the highest mean ratings, 3.5, 3.2 and 3.2 respectively, have been identified as the challenges that may limit the effectiveness of libraries participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR). This findings agrees with Olowokudejo & Aduloju (2011) that lack of qualified workforce and inadequate funding of libraries are prominent challenges to implementation of CSR in libraries.

Conclusion

The study critically surveyed the basis for libraries participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities for sustainable development in the society. University libraries can engage in variety of CSR activities to facilitate and promote development of the society. These include libraries participation in community development, promotion of citizens; welfare, dissemination of information on employment opportunities to unemployed graduates, supporting of educational-related activities among others. Evidently, libraries engagement in CSR initiatives

will help in changing the public perception of libraries as well as the establishment of mutual understanding between the library and members of the host community. In which case, libraries cannot exist in isolation of the community it is located; it occupies a central position and is expected to contribute to the development of that society.

Recommendation

In line with the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- a. ***Adequate funding of university libraries:*** It is pertinent that university libraries should be adequately funded to enable each library carry out sustainable CSR programmes geared towards development of the society. Funding is a pre-requisite for full implementation of CSR activities.
- b. ***Commitment towards CSR activities by heads of libraries:*** leaders in the profession in collaboration with heads of university libraries should show strong commitment towards the provision of CSR initiatives. A non-challant attitude towards the initiatives may have negative effect on the implementation process.
- c. ***A change in professional orientation:*** There is an urgent need for librarians in university libraries to embrace professional change in their orientation towards library practices. Librarianship in this age has transcended beyond the conventional form of sitting down and waiting for the reader to come and request for books. The era of arm-chair librarianship is over and it is imperative that libraries accept this fact and change their orientation towards library services. This will help librarians to appreciate the necessity of engaging in CSRs, and become part of the institutions contributing to the development of the society through CSR initiatives.
- d. ***Recruitment of innovative and creative librarians:*** librarians of this dispensation should be creative and innovative in their approach to effective library service delivery. Recruitment of innovative and creative librarians will help in ensuring that the provision of CSR in university libraries is fully achieved. Efforts should be made in seeking out for creative and innovative librarians in the course of recruitment.

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